

VZCZCXRO0735
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DE RUEHTH #1523/01 2741329
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 011329Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0774
INFO RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 0010
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW IMMEDIATE 0012
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0006
RUEHFT/AMCONSUL FRANKFURT 0045
RUEHKW/AMCONSUL KRAKOW 0001
RUEHMZ/AMCONSUL MUNICH 0001
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0017

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001523

CODEL
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OREP](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [AFIN](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE -- STAFFDEL TURNER (OCTOBER 8-13)

REF: STATE 97917

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¶1. Embassy warmly welcomes the visit to Greece of CSCE Congressional Staff Delegation members Alex Johnson and Winsome Packer from October 8-13 in order to join CODEL Cardin for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Meeting in Athens.

¶2. Embassy has assigned Political Counselor George H. Frowick as principal point of contact. He can be reached at +30-210-720-2381 (office), +30-695-800-8680 (cell), and via email at FrowickGH@state.gov. The administrative point of contact is General Services Officer Ramon Menendez-Carreira who can be contacted at +30-210-720-2387 (office), or via email at Menendez-CarreiraR@state.gov.

¶3. Documents required: Diplomatic and official passport holders must have Greek diplomatic visas, a valid Schengen visa or diplomatic ID from any other Schengen country, in addition to their passport, in order to enter Greece. The Embassy will be unable to obtain plane-side visas for USG employees arriving in Greece without proper documentation. Holders of tourist passports do not/not require visas.

¶4. Currency: Greece is a member of the European Monetary Union, and the Euro is the currency of the country. ATMs are readily available throughout the country and they will accept U.S. debit cards. In addition, most banks and major hotels provide accommodation exchange services.

¶5. Office space/laptops/mobile phones: For those employees planning on bringing laptops and modems to use in their hotels, please remember that this equipment can be used for processing unclassified (non-SBU) information only. Current here is 220 volt, 50 cycles, and outlets are two-pronged. Bring along a plug adapter and equipment that can handle the voltage. Laptops are not permitted in controlled access areas of the Embassy. European GSM mobile phones function normally in Greece.

¶6. Security information:

IA. Embassy Athens is designated "critical" for indigenous terrorism. In the past, local Greek terrorist groups have targeted prominent Greeks as well as certain non-Greek officials, including Americans. We believe that the threat to official U.S. Government personnel on short-term assignments to Greece or visiting for tourism is relatively low. The indigenous groups historically have engaged in extensive operational surveillance over long periods of time. In 2003 and again in 2004, the Greek Government made significant progress to combat domestic terrorism by successfully convicting the leader and key hit men of the November 17 terrorist organization and of the ELA. 17N was responsible for assassinating prominent Greeks and five members of the U.S. Mission over the course of its 30-year history. Convicted ELA members were responsible for several bombings, attempted murders and were involved in at least one assassination. There is a resurgent threat of domestic terrorist groups, including Revolutionary Struggle (which launched an RPG at the U.S. Embassy in 2007) and the new group Sect of Revolutionaries, which killed a Greek police officer on June 17, in the first such fatal attack in years. We urge vigilance and caution, as the worldwide threat from other terrorist groups against Americans in general remains high. Official Americans should assume they are potential targets.

IB. Over the past year the U.S. Embassy has experienced numerous protest marches and anti-U.S. demonstrations. These protests are generally peaceful though a few provoked random acts of violence. Travelers to Greece are advised that protests or demonstrations could occur at any time; unwitting observers or bystanders might be

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identified, to their disadvantage, as Americans. RSO recommends that official U.S. travelers in Greece remain alert when moving about in public places and avoid certain places where demonstrators frequently congregate. These places include the Polytechnical University area, located on 28 October (Patission) Street between the National Archeological Museum and Omonia Square; Exarchion Square, located near Kolonaki; Omonia and Syntagma Squares, which are often used as launch sites for large demonstrations; and Mavili Square, located near the U.S. Embassy. Visitors should keep abreast of news about large demonstrations and avoid these areas and metro stops.

IC. Crime is rated "medium" in Greece. For TDY visitors, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are the most common crimes. Taxis are generally safe though metered cabs are recommended. Taxis will often pick up more than one passenger unless prior arrangements are made. Crimes of opportunity thefts, break-ins, and occasional scams are on the rise. Travelers should be especially cautious with wallets, purses, and parcels when traveling on crowded streets, public buses, trolleys, and/or subways. There have been several instances of motorcyclists approaching cars stuck in traffic, reaching through open windows or smashing closed ones, and stealing whatever is within reach. We have also recently learned of a new scenario in which motorcyclists open the trunk of a vehicle and remove the contents. The Embassy recommends keeping purses, parcels, handbags, etc. out of sight under the seat or on the floor of the car. Windows should be kept closed and doors locked. Pedestrians may also be confronted by beggars and other street people who may attempt to divert attention, then steal unprotected valuables either by pick-pocketing or snatch-and-grab techniques. Women are generally safe from violent crime in Greece.

McCarthy